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THE IDAHO LANDS PROJECT:

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE



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A DYNAMIC PROCESS:
SUCCESS!

The final line for the Idaho Lands Project in 1993 deserves to be the first line in this update: Two parcels of land, one adjoining the popular shoreline of Lake Coeur d'Alene and the other outstanding wildlife habitat within the Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area, are now in public ownership. These are lands that people wanted in public ownership. They are important for their recreational, wildlife, scenic, botanical and other natural qualities.

Thanks to congressional appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), BLM was able to obtain these important land parcels, ensuring their values would last for generations to

come. Other support for the purchases came from BLM's partners in the Idaho Lands Project, including Kootenai County commissioners who provided additional funding toward purchase.

Negotiations are in progress on other parcels that will help fulfill the increasing demand for public recreation in northern Idaho, while also meeting the challenge to manage and protect sustainable ecosystems through acquisition of wetlands, wildlife habitat and other land with outstanding natural resources.

The success of the Idaho Lands Project to date is the strength and diversity of the public and private partnerships supporting these acquisitions. The Idaho Lands

Project has brought together loggers and conservationists, recreationists and land developers. And from it all has come a unified effort to secure high-value land for public ownership.

The first year's accomplishments are satisfying. Yet many other potential acquisitions remain, some with only a small window of opportunity. And while public support is strong, congressional funding critical to the completion of these acquisitions is uncertain.

Acquiring private holdings from landowners willing to sell or exchange their properties will remain the focus of the Idaho Lands Project in 1994. Potential

acquisitions in 11 northern Idaho counties include three Special Recreation Management Areas and two BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). A third ACEC, including land in the Lolo Creek drainage, has been added this year.

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THE GROWING NEED

What drives the Idaho Lands project?
Public need.

In a state that abounds in spectacular outdoor recreation opportunities, northern Idaho is the most-visited region by leisure travelers by a wide margin. A University of Idaho study found that not only does northern Idaho have the highest tourism rate, but it also has the greatest potential for additional travel and tourism growth.

Northern Idaho is not a place visited exclusively by residents. It serves the third largest recreation market in the four-state area of Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Montana, trailing only the Seattle-Tacoma and Portland regions. More than 500,000 people live within a 50-mile radius of Coeur d'Alene.

Boating is the major attraction. Although the eleven northern counties represent only about 10 percent of the state's population, almost 50 percent of the boats in Idaho are registered there.

But this rosy picture is dimmed by the lack of public launch sites and campgrounds around the major lakes in northern Idaho. Most of the lakeshores are privately owned, effectively blocking public access. Only about two percent of the shoreline of Lake Coeur d'Alene, for example, is publicly owned.

The dynamics, then, are these:

■ An area of immense recreational opportunity;

■ A large — and growing — population of outdoor recreationists;

■ And a severe shortage of public access and recreation facilities.

The Idaho Lands Project is designed to help fill the gap between the demand and supply of quality public recreational facilities. The success of the project will have a bearing on northern Idaho's future economy and quality of life.

Recreation isn't the only reason why the Idaho Lands Project merits support. Critical resources are at stake.

The 11-county Idaho Lands Project area contains all known habitat for the state's only federally listed endangered plant, MacFarlane's Four O'clock. And more than one-third of the available habitat within the Snake River basin for threatened and endangered salmon species is located with the project area.

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This is a time when more is being asked of government — higher levels of service, greater efforts to identify and meet "customer" needs, and good use of federal dollars.

The Idaho Lands Project meets all of those objectives and many, many more.

THE LAND

The properties that have been identified for acquisition in the Idaho Lands Project represent northern Idaho's diversity of natural, biologic and outstanding scenic and recreational values.

Of the eight properties first identified for purchase or exchange, two have been acquired. The natural resource values of the properties are impressive — more than one-half mile of habitat for the threatened Snake River salmon; critical wintering habitat for big game, upland game and non-game species; and acquisition of critical open areas that contain wetlands and also provides improved recreational access and wildlife viewing opportunities on Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Negotiations on several other high priority acquisitions continue. Some of them should be completed in the next year. Some projects originally identified for acquisition are no longer available, illustrating the limited availability of some properties.

BLM, though, has no shortage of outstanding acquisition prospects. Working with private landowners and the Idaho Lands Project partnership members, new opportunities on Lake Coeur d'Alene and in Lolo Creek have been identified. BLM is considering a combination of acquisition methods, including exchange, purchase of fee and less than fee interests, and phased acquisitions, to maximize the public values protected and stretch limited resources.

A closer look at BLM's recently completed and active projects follows.

BLACKWELL ISLAND

Cooperation among the landowner, Kootenai County officials, The Trust for Public Land and BLM mean that about 33 acres of Blackwell Island, just west of Coeur d'Alene, is now publicly owned. The property contains quality wetlands and provides much-needed areas for wildlife viewing, picnicking and fishing, while expanding boat access and reducing overcrowding at existing facilities in and around Lake Coeur d'Alene.

SOUTH FORK OF CAPTAIN JOHN CREEK

On July 14, 1993, with the assistance of The Conservation Fund, BLM completed a title transfer bringing into public ownership 1,280 acres within the Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area. The property, located south of Lewiston, contains a diversity of resources including spawning habitat for threatened Snake River chinook salmon, valuable wildlife habitat for big game species, upland game and other species of concern, and substantial stands of old growth timber that is valued at more than \$3 million. It is surrounded by state and federal holdings in the 125,000-acre Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

COUGAR BAY

Transfer of this critical wildlife viewing area to public ownership is imminent. The future of this property adjacent to Lake Coeur d'Alene has been a concern of a local developer, a coalition of concerned citizens and The Nature Conservancy. Working together, these groups helped to bring about the acquisition, which protects wetlands, riparian habitat and open space values along more than 3,000 feet of shoreline on the outskirts of the city of Coeur d'Alene.

FLYNN CREEK

Early discussions with the private owner of 450 acres along the Salmon River have been promising. A scenic easement would

protect the visual quality along almost three miles of the Salmon, shielding it from development.

MOWRY

The Mowry property includes 1,400 feet of Lake Coeur d'Alene frontage in one of the few remaining undeveloped coves. Negotiations are in progress, focusing on reconciling value estimates for the 1,200-acre property.

BLUE CREEK BAY #2

Blue Creek Bay is located near the east end of Lake Coeur d'Alene. Discussions with the property owner started while BLM was pursuing an exchange to acquire an adjoining private parcel.

That exchange was completed, so efforts to work with the Blue Creek Bay #2 owner have accelerated to ensure protection of the area's natural values. Bald eagles roost in the area.

LOFFS BAY

Heavily used by migratory waterfowl, this 400-acre parcel on Lake Coeur d'Alene provides excellent shallow water wildlife habitat. The property surrounds a popular county boat dock in the bay that could be expanded to provide additional recreation facilities that are in short supply.

LOLO CREEK

Lolo Creek is a major tributary of the Clearwater River. The project involves 25 landowners and is intended to acquire and protect high-value fisheries, wildlife habitat, and recreation property within the 30-mile segment of the drainage between Lolo Creek's confluence with the Clearwater River and the national forest boundary. Existing BLM land within Lolo Creek is designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The lower 12 miles of Lolo Creek cuts through an almost impassable canyon of rugged beauty. In the upper portion of the project area, the drainage widens, with miles of meandering, braided stream channel flanked by lush riparian vegetation.

THE RESOURCES

With BLM, acquisition is not a case of "Gee, that's pretty and it's close to the lake, let's try to get it." Consideration of many qualities is given before a decision to pursue acquisition is made.

Current proposed acquisitions would bring more anadromous fisheries habitat into public ownership and increase habitat for bald eagles, elk, deer and many non-game species. Acquisitions would help relieve the clogged conditions at the handful of current public boat launches and also boost other recreational pursuits — hiking, photography, fishing, picnicking and rafting. In many instances, the Idaho Lands Project would also enhance the quality of other nearby or adjacent public lands by blocking them up and linking similar values.

Each land parcel is screened carefully before a decision is made whether to pursue acquisition. That ensures that only parcels containing the highest values end up in public ownership and that the best use is made of funding and federal land used in exchanges. The Idaho Lands Project isn't about building a huge federal land base; it's about acquiring high-quality land and resources in places where they will best benefit the public.

The naturalness and ecologic values of the properties sought by the Idaho Lands Project represent some of the last of the West's best places. In the future, areas such as these will become more scarce, more costly and more difficult to acquire. And as these opportunities diminish, so will many of the outstanding natural values that make these lands unique.

RESOURCES

Ecosystem Management

Old Growth Forests

Riparian Communities

Anadromous Fisheries

Recreation

Neotropical Migratory Birds

Wetlands

Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive Species Habitat

Environmental Education

Historical Values

Wildlife Habitat

Biological Diversity

GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

A strength of the Idaho Lands Project is the diversity of interests and groups that have met together, negotiated, resolved issues and brought projects to completion.

It's a result of something called *partnerships*, and without them, the Idaho Lands Project might still just be a good idea still waiting to get off the ground.

The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, Kootenai County, the state of Idaho, Trust for Public Land, elected officials, chambers of commerce, developers, conservationists, timber companies, private citizens and many others have joined in powerful partnerships with BLM to bring about several key acquisitions. As partners in the Idaho Lands Project, they've seen to it that cooperation has replaced contention; that progress has supplanted marking time.

An example was the effort to acquire 391 acres at Gamble Lake, near Lake Pend Orielle. Its success depended on an unusual coalition made up of a timber company, eleven private landowners, The Nature Conservancy and BLM. But the partnership was successful and the outstanding recreational, wildlife and wetlands of Gamble Lake are now owned by the public.

BLM is looking for more and stronger partnerships in the future. Success breeds success, and as the benefits of the Idaho Lands Project become more apparent to the public, other people, businesses and organizations will want to join the growing partnership and help meet the goals of the effort.

The reason is simple. Everyone likes to be on a winning team.

In the last few years, BLM has worked closely with Kootenai County elected officials and other partners to locate and acquire property. The intent is to relieve the pressure on public boat launch sites on the north end of Lake Coeur d'Alene. One property that fit the bill for BLM was a site on the north end of Blackwell Island. It's adjacent to Highway 95, less than five minutes from downtown Coeur d'Alene, and provides good access to the lake.

Kootenai County officials recognized the recreational value of Blackwell Island, too. They told BLM that funds could be made available to help with the purchase as part of an agreement signed by the State Land Board, Hagadone Corporation and the county. The agreement provided a compensatory payment from Hagadone Corporation to the state of Idaho and the people of Kootenai County for future acquisition of high value public recreation property on the lake. Because of the acquisition's obvious importance to help meet public access demand, the county agreed to provide \$130,000 from the fund toward the acquisition. BLM provided the remainder of the funds for purchase, and the net result is this: 32 acres of prime recreational property on Blackwell Island now is in public ownership.

It's a perfect example of how the Idaho Lands Project is working — for BLM, its partners, and most of all, for the public.

WHY BLM?

Why is BLM the agency to spearhead the Idaho Lands Project?

Here's a list.

PROFICIENCY

Much of BLM's land ownership pattern in northern Idaho is scattered. Managing small tracts of land and the accompanying opportunities and challenges that it brings is not new to BLM. Through the years, BLM has developed the expertise needed to manage and maintain these tracts. We also have a long — and successful — track record of working with northern Idaho private property owners whose holdings are adjacent to public land.

ACQUISITION EXPERIENCE

Acquisitions are often long and complex processes. Experience counts. And no other agency, state or federal, has more experience with acquisitions and exchanges than BLM. The system is in place, staffed by skilled, knowledgeable people. That can make all the difference between a successful acquisition and one that fails.

PARTNERSHIPS

A major part of the Idaho Lands Project's success is the strength of the partnerships that have been developed. BLM has an outstanding relationship with many of the key players in northern Idaho land acquisition efforts — and can turn to them for support when needed.

DOLLARS

As a result of the Arkansas-Idaho Land Exchange Act, Congress pledged future funding for BLM to help offset the loss of public land in Idaho. These funds, derived from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, are the financial backbone of the acquisition program. Although the commitment of Congressional funding is not ironclad, acquisition dollars have been allocated to BLM in Idaho two years running. As public support for the Idaho Lands Project swells and the funding solidifies, it gives BLM a tremendous acquisition advantage among public agencies.

INTEREST

BLM employees view the Idaho Lands Project as their specialty. They are eager to take on the challenges that come with acquiring these highly sought lands. They see it as an opportunity to provide a true public service and also demonstrate their capability to manage diverse resources.

MAKING IT WORK

In 1992, the *Arkansas-Idaho Land Exchange Act* designated 9,600 acres of BLM land in the Coeur d'Alene District be conveyed to a private company, Potlatch Corp. Another 9,100 acres of BLM land was transferred to the U.S. Forest Service to compensate for land it conveyed to Potlatch. In return, Potlatch conveyed 41,000 acres of Arkansas bottomland to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Much of the 18,700 acres formerly managed by BLM was targeted for use in exchanges that would have brought key Idaho sites into public ownership.

The value of the lands contributed by BLM was \$27 million.

Where does this leave BLM?

Congress pledged to consider appropriating funds to BLM to compensate for the land conveyed to Potlatch and the U.S. Forest Service. BLM, in turn, would use the funds for acquisitions identified in the Idaho Lands Project.

In 1993, BLM received a \$4.2 million appropriation for the Idaho Lands

Project. In 1994, Congress approved another \$1.45 million, bringing the two-year total to \$5.65 million. That money was used to acquire properties possessing high public resource values. Future funding, including the funds requested in 1995, would be used to continue the work.

Actual funding has fallen short of BLM's goals for the project. In cases, potential acquisitions have been scaled back, deferred or foregone because of funding deficiencies.

It's critical that the funding cycle be consistent and sufficient. Land acquisitions can take months or even years. They are complicated and do not neatly fit into BLM's annual budgeting process. Each step builds upon the previous step. If funds dry up, work on many acquisitions will stop and all the time, money and progress up to that point may be for nothing as the window of opportunity closes.

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SHAPING NORTHERN IDAHO'S FUTURE

The future is where we'll spend the rest of our lives. In northern Idaho, BLM and its many partners in the Idaho Lands Project have the chance now to shape the future of the economy, recreational opportunities and natural resources.

The Idaho Lands Project is remarkable in that it will help fill an important, tangible public need. Anyone who has waited an hour in line to launch a boat on Lake Coeur d'Alene can vouch for that. Further, BLM is an agency that is highly qualified and more than willing to shoulder the responsibilities inherent to the Idaho Lands Project.

The success of the project is largely a matter of money and timing. Opportunities can, and have, vanished because sufficient funding wasn't available at precisely the right time. Funding in the next few years is crucial to ensure the day-to-day, month-to-month progress needed to complete the Idaho Lands Project.

To an extent, what northern Idaho will look like and *be* like will be determined by the success of the Idaho Lands Project. BLM wants to continue building on the success of the project, and help ensure that the future is bright for northern Idaho.



SHAPING THE FUTURE

The future is not a distant land, it is a place we are creating every day. It is the choices we make, the actions we take, the dreams we pursue. It is the path we choose to walk, the road we choose to travel. It is the life we choose to live, the world we choose to build. It is the future we choose to shape.

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SHAPING THE FUTURE



